The listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

Listing of Claims:

1.   (Currently Amended) A computer-implemented method for forecasting a potential cost for an indirect procurement commodity comprising ~~the steps, performed by a processor, of~~ :

receiving a volume of the indirect procurement commodity to be block purchased for a future period;

calculating a cost of the volume of the indirect procurement commodity based on historical consumption data for a past period; and

forecasting a potential cost of the indirect procurement commodity to be purchased for a future period based on the calculated cost and a market imbalance factor, M_i, associated with the indirect procurement commodity wherein the market imbalance factor is a function of an index price of energy and is calculated based on the following relationship:

$$M_i = (V_B - V_i) * x_i$$

where Mi is the market imbalance factor for a cell, i, of a consumption matrix, V_B is a block volume of the indirect procurement commodity, V_i is an actual volume of consumption for the cell i, and x_i is the index price of energy.

2.   (Original) The method of claim 1 wherein the indirect procurement commodity comprises energy.

3.   (Original) The method of claim 1 wherein calculating a cost of the volume comprises:

multiplying the volume of the indirect procurement commodity by a time factor wherein the time factor is associated with the past period.

4.   (Original) The method of claim 3 wherein the time factor comprises a number of off-peak hours in the past period.

5.   (Original) The method of claim 3 wherein the time factor comprises a number of peak hours in the past period.

6.   (Previously Presented) The method of claim 1 wherein forecasting a potential cost of the indirect procurement commodity further comprises:

calculating the market imbalance factor.

7.   (Previously Presented) The method of claim 6 wherein calculating the market imbalance factor further comprises:

calculating the market imbalance factor for the future period based on data associated with the past period.

8.   (Original) The method of claim 7 wherein data associated with the past period comprises consumption data and price index data.

9.   (Original) The method of claim 8 wherein forecasting the potential cost of the indirect procurement commodity further comprises:

adding the market imbalance factor to the cost of the volume of the indirect procurement commodity thereby generating a forecasted cost of the volume of the indirect procurement commodity.

10.   (Original) The method of claim 9 wherein forecasting the potential cost of the indirect procurement commodity further comprises:

factoring a market fluctuation component into the forecasted cost of the volume of the indirect procurement commodity.

11.   (Original) The method of claim 10 wherein the market fluctuation component comprises a best guess estimate of market fluctuation during the future period.

12.   (Currently Amended) A system for forecasting a potential cost for an indirect procurement commodity comprising:

a display;

a processor ~~operably~~ <u>operatively</u> coupled to the display, the processor further comprising

means for receiving a volume of the indirect procurement commodity to be block purchased for a future period;

means for calculating a cost of the volume of the indirect procurement commodity based on historical consumption data for a past period; and

means for forecasting a potential cost of the indirect procurement commodity to be purchased for a future period based on the calculated cost and a market imbalance factor, M_i, associated with the indirect procurement commodity wherein the market imbalance factor is a function of an index price of energy and is calculated based on the following relationship:

$M_i = (V_B - V_i) * x_i$

where Mi is the market imbalance factor for a cell, i, of a consumption matrix, V_B is a block volume of the indirect procurement commodity, V_i is an actual volume of consumption for the cell i, and x_i is the index price of energy.

13.   (Original) The system of claim 12 wherein the means for determining a cost of the volume comprises:

means for multiplying the volume of the indirect procurement commodity by a time factor wherein the time factor is associated with the past period.

14.   (Original) The system of claim 13 wherein the time factor comprises a number of off-peak hours in the past period.

15.   (Original) The system of claim 13 wherein the time factor comprises a number of peak hours in the past period.

16.   (Previously Presented) The system of claim 12 wherein the means for forecasting a potential cost of the indirect procurement commodity further comprises:

means for calculating the market imbalance factor.

17.   (Currently Amended) A system for forecasting a potential cost for an indirect procurement commodity comprising:

a display;

a processor coupled to the display;

a graphical user interface coupled to the processor; and

a cost forecasting tool coupled to the graphical user interface capable of:

receiving a volume of the indirect procurement commodity to be block purchased for a future period;

calculating a cost of the volume of the indirect procurement commodity based on historical consumption data for a past period; and

forecasting a potential cost of the indirect procurement commodity to be purchased for a future period based on the calculated cost and a market imbalance factor, M_i, associated with the indirect procurement commodity wherein the market imbalance factor is a function of an index price of energy and is calculated based on the following relationship:

$$M_i = (V_B - V_i) * x_i$$

where Mi is the market imbalance factor for a cell, i, of a consumption matrix, V_B is a block volume of the indirect procurement commodity, V_i is an actual volume of consumption for the cell i, and x_i is the index price of energy..

18.   (Previously Presented) The system of claim 17 wherein forecasting a potential cost of the indirect procurement commodity further comprises:

calculating the market imbalance factor.

19.   (Previously Presented) The system of claim 18 wherein calculating the at least one variable factor further comprises:

calculating the market imbalance factor for the future period based on data associated with the past period.

20.   (Original) The system of claim 19 wherein data associated with the past period comprises consumption data and price index data.

21.   (Original) The system of claim 20 wherein forecasting the potential cost of the indirect procurement commodity further comprises:

adding the market imbalance factor to the cost of the volume of the indirect procurement commodity thereby generating a forecasted cost of the volume of the indirect procurement commodity.

22.   (Original) The system of claim 21 wherein forecasting the potential cost of the indirect procurement commodity further comprises:

       factoring a market fluctuation component into the forecasted cost of the volume of the indirect procurement commodity.

23.   (Original) The system of claim 22 wherein the market fluctuation component comprises a best guess estimate of market fluctuation during the future period.

24.   (Currently Amended) A computer program product for forecasting a potential cost for an indirect procurement commodity, the computer program product comprising a computer usable medium having computer readable program means for causing a computer to perform the steps of:

       receiving a volume of the indirect procurement commodity to be block purchased for a future period;

       calculating a cost of the volume of the indirect procurement commodity based on historical consumption data for a past period; and

       forecasting a potential cost of the indirect procurement commodity to be purchased for a future period based on the calculated cost and a market imbalance factor, M_i, associated with the indirect procurement commodity wherein the market imbalance factor is a function of an index price of energy and is calculated based on the following relationship:

       $M_i = (V_B - V_i) * x_i$

       where Mi is the market imbalance factor for a cell, i, of a consumption matrix, V_B is a block volume of the indirect procurement commodity, V_i is an actual volume of consumption for the cell i, and x_i is the index price of energy..

25.   (Previously Presented) The computer program product of claim 24 wherein forecasting a potential cost of the indirect procurement commodity further comprises:

       calculating the market imbalance factor.

26.   (Previously Presented) The computer program product of claim 25 wherein calculating the market imbalance factor further comprises:

calculating the market imbalance factor for the future period based on data associated with the past period.

27.   (Original) The computer program product of claim 26 wherein data associated with the past period comprises consumption data and price index data.

28.   (Original) The computer program product of claim 27 wherein forecasting the potential cost of the indirect procurement commodity further comprises:

adding the market imbalance factor to the cost of the volume of the indirect procurement commodity thereby generating a forecasted cost of the volume of the indirect procurement commodity.

29.   (Original) The computer program product of claim 28 wherein forecasting the potential cost of the indirect procurement commodity further comprises:

factoring a market fluctuation component into the forecasted cost of the volume of the indirect procurement commodity.

30.   (Currently Amended) A computer-implemented method of doing business comprising ~~the steps, performed by a processor, of~~:

receiving a volume of the indirect procurement commodity to be block purchased for a future period;

calculating a cost of the volume of the indirect procurement commodity based on historical consumption data for a past period; and

forecasting a potential cost of the indirect procurement commodity to be purchased for a future period based on the calculated cost and a market imbalance factor, M_i, associated with the indirect procurement commodity wherein the market imbalance factor is a function of an index price of energy and is calculated based on the following relationship:

$$M_i = (V_B - V_i) * x_i$$

where Mi is the market imbalance factor for a cell, i, of a consumption matrix, V_B is a block volume of the indirect procurement commodity, V_i is an actual volume of consumption for the cell i, and x_i is the index price of energy.

31.   (Original) The method of claim 30 wherein the indirect procurement commodity comprises energy.

32.   (Previously Presented) The method of claim 30 wherein forecasting a potential cost of the indirect procurement commodity further comprises:

        calculating the market imbalance factor.

33.   (Previously Presented) The method of claim 32 wherein calculating the market imbalance factor further comprises:

        calculating the market imbalance factor for the future period based on data associated with the past period.

34.   (Original) The method of claim 33 wherein data associated with the past period comprises consumption data and price index data.

35.   (Original) The method of claim 34 wherein forecasting the potential cost of the indirect procurement commodity further comprises:

        adding the market imbalance factor to the cost of the volume of the indirect procurement commodity thereby generating a forecasted cost of the volume of the indirect procurement commodity.